

# NY Association of School Psychologists

# Children of Warriors Toolkit

Supporting Children and  
Families of Active Duty and  
Deployed Military Personnel  
in the Schools



## **The Impact of Deployment on Children and Families**

**(Information provided by the North Carolina Public Schools, State Department of Education)**

### *Deployment*

Deployment is the movement of an individual or entire military unit to an overseas location to accomplish a task or mission. The mission may be as routine as providing training or as dangerous as a war.

### *How Deployments Affect Families*

Deployments cause stress for both the service member and the family that is left behind. Regardless of the length of the deployment, the family will have to redistribute family roles (e.g., finances, the maintenance of the house and car, and the care and discipline of children). Among young families, there is a strong tendency to return to the location of their families of origin. These moves are made to reduce costs and to add to the psychological and physical support needed to keep the family going.

Many factors influence family adaptation to deployment. Each individual in the family of a deployed service member must adjust to new roles and responsibilities in addition to the "loss" through separation of their loved one(s). Disorganized families with multiple pre-existing problems and/or troubled family members tend to be at higher risk for poor adjustments during deployments and separations.

Most school age children and their families will be able to adjust to a "new normal" after the departure of a spouse or parent. However, students who have had previous social or emotional problems may continue to have serious symptoms of stress and their ability to function in the school remains compromised.

The difference between a normal and serious reaction is how long and to what degree the student exhibits adjustment problems. For example, the student who is withdrawn and goes unnoticed in a classroom may need more immediate intervention than the agitated child who is acting out. If any of the "normal" reactions to the stress of deployment persist over six weeks, then the parent/interim caregiver needs to be notified and a referral made to appropriate school, community or military services.

### **SERIOUS STRESS INDICATORS**

The following signs indicate that the student is in acute distress and needs to be referred for immediate evaluation:

- Unfocused agitation or hysteria.
- Disconnection from peers and adults.
- Serious depression or withdrawal.
- Auditory or visual hallucinations.
- Any prolonged major change from normal functioning that continues six weeks after deployment.

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### Serious Stress Reactions:

- Inability or unable to resume normal classroom assignments and activities.
- High levels of emotions such as continued crying and intense sadness.
- Depressed, withdrawn and non-communicative behaviors.
- Violent or depressed feelings expressed in "dark" drawings or writings.
- Causing intentional harm to themselves or others.
- A significant amount of weight gain or loss in a period of weeks.
- Reduction or loss of care about personal appearance.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.

Acute reactions to separation generally appear within the first 24 to 48 hours. In the two weeks after the deployment, the reactions may change. Behaviors will vary depending upon the age, developmental and maturity of the child. Some children may experience a delayed reaction to the stress of separation weeks or months after their family member deploys.

More common reactions that parents and teachers might observe in children when a parent is deployed are listed below.

In preschool or kindergarten children you may see :

- Clinging to people or favorite toy, blanket, etc.
- Unexplained crying or tearfulness.
- Change in relationship with same-age friends.
- Choosing adults over same-age friends.
- Increased acts of aggression toward people or things.
- Shrinking away from people or things.
- Sleep difficulties (nightmares, frequent waking).
- Regressing such as toileting accidents, thumb sucking, etc.
- Eating difficulties.

In school-age children you may see any of the signs exhibited by younger children, PLUS:

- A rise in complaints about stomach aches, headaches, or other illnesses when nothing seems to be wrong.
- More irritability or crabbiness.
- Increase in school problems such as a drop in grades, an unwillingness to attend school, or odd complaints about school and/or teachers.
- Behavior changes.

However shocked or dismayed adults may be by children's reactions, it provides an opportunity for children and adults to talk about their respective thoughts and feelings and begins a new period of adjustment in the family.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/militarysupport/deployment/affect>

## **Suggestions for the School Environment**

**(Information provided by the North Carolina Public Schools, State Department of Education)**

### **In The Classroom**

As a teacher, you are a significant source of support for children affected by deployment. Below are some suggestions and strategies that can be

- Maintain a predictable, structured class schedule with specific rules and consequences.
- Plan for shorter lessons and proceed at a slower pace if necessary.
- Be approachable and sensitive; limit aggressive or negative communication.
- Take note of children who express themselves inappropriately in an effort to cope with overwhelming emotions.
- Acknowledge that feeling sad, angry, and hurt is normal when someone we care about leaves.
- Reinforce ways to express negative emotions without hurting.
- Reassure students that everyone adjusts to change at a different pace.

### **Beyond the classroom:**

- Refer students or families to military support organizations for information on deployment workshops, educational materials, or counseling services.
- Invite representatives from military family support organizations to PTA meetings to talk about separations and children.
- Encourage military families to attend deployment-focused programs.
- At the start of each school year, encourage military parents to provide the school with the name of the unit they are assigned to and update the schools on deployment plans throughout the year. This would allow the school to keep a confidential master list of students who have/will have parents deployed. This information helps teachers and counselors to be attuned to any emotional, behavioral, or academic changes that may occur with a student as a result of a parent being deployed.
- Facilitate deployment support groups for students whose parents or relatives are involved in a deployment.

### **Ideas for Your Classroom: Lesson Plans/Activities**

- Work on craft or science projects that illustrate the change in seasons - pumpkins, snowflakes, leaves, and planting seeds. This helps young children identify the passage of time and relate this to their parent/caregivers return.
- Encourage younger children to bring in some of the deployed parent's worn clothing and uniform items to use for dress-up play.
- Encourage students to communicate with their deployed parents.
- Have a patriotic day at school. Encourage students to wear red, white, and blue; sing patriotic songs; learn about the number of stars and stripes on the U.S. flag.
- Put together a "Proud to be a Military Kid" bulletin board and encourage students to display pictures of a Military family members.

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- Display a poster of the Armed Forces insignia on a school counselor's door or outside their the office.
- Have a clock in the classroom that shows military time. A child with a deployed parent might want to help the class learn how to tell time the way their mother or father does.
- Arrange a field trip to a nearby military base or training facility.
- Make a memory book or calendar reflecting positive thoughts and actions while a loved one is deployed.
- Write cards or letters to the deployed family member.
- Ask the parent/caregiver at home to leave stamped, self-addressed envelopes with the teacher to mail school newsletters as well as student work to the deployed parent.
- Have a deployed family member pen pal program. Ask parents to send postcards, maps, stamps, coins, menus, or information and articles that describe the foreign duty station, port, etc and use them for lessons.
- Track the deployed parent's journey on a map, allowing the class to learn about the world.
- Turn a shoe box into a deployment time capsule. At the beginning of the deployment fill the box with items like a piece of string as long as the child's height, a tracing of the child's hand or foot, a list of the child's favorites (song, candy bar, television show, toy, etc.). Open them when the deployed parent returns to measure changes that have occurred.
- Ask more experienced military students to assist those students who have little or no experience with deployments.
- Have a "no homework pass" which entitles a student to a night off from homework so that he can spend more time with the returning parent.
- Adopt a Soldier, Airman, or Unit. Students can write letters, send craft projects or other items to the Soldier or Airman.
- Arrange a puppet show through Army Community Services (ACS) from Fort Bragg. This program is offered to early elementary students to help them understand and cope with the stressors brought on by deployments.
- Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. have partnered with The New York Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) and Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) TM, to develop "Talk, Listen, Connect", an outreach initiative to help the young children of members of the United States Armed Services, National Guard and Reserves cope with the feelings, challenges, and concerns they experience during various phases of deployment: pre-deployment, deployment and homecoming. Call Military One Source ([www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)) at 1-800-342-9647 for a free DVD to use with students ages three to five.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/militarysupport/deployment/educators>

## Tips for Parents Supporting the Child Whose Military Parent is Deploying

<http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/tentips.htm>

1. **Talk as a family before deployment:** Before a deployment, military members are usually preoccupied with many preparatory activities at their military unit, requiring extended hours and increased workload. As a result, military members come home tired, perhaps late, and are already reluctant to address painful issues of impending separation. Family members frequently collude in this. It is important to overcome this resistance and make plans with the family as far ahead as possible.
2. **Bestow, rather than "dump", responsibilities on remaining family members.** Concerns expressed by children after a parent has been deployed are that everything has changed at home and they now have to do "everything" that the deployed parent used to do. Discussions before deployment, in which trust and faith in a child's ability to carry out a responsibility are expressed, are valuable times to help a child to feel he/she is important to the family, is important to the deployed parent, and that he/she can help share a potential burden with the remaining parent. As a result, the remaining parent will have more time and energy for the children.
3. **Make plans for the family to continue to progress together, and include the deployed parent in ongoing projects.** It is important that the family not put "life on hold" in anticipation of the return of the deployed parent. This will result in stagnation, loss of direction, and burn-out. Make plans for specific goals to be reached by each of the children and the remaining parent, as well as family projects to work on. Help children design ways to communicate with the deployed parent, and relate progress made, so that the deployed parent can be part of that progress by seeing pictures, report cards, to which he/she can respond and provide encouragement. Make sure the remaining parent and deployed parent have specific plans on how to communicate. Keep regular but not too frequent communication. Include the deployed parent by keeping them informed and involved, but do not discuss problems and issues that he/she cannot do anything about.
4. **Continue family traditions and develop new ones.** One very stabilizing factor in a family is routine and tradition. Don't stop Friday pizza night, or Saturday outings because the parent has deployed. If anything, become more predictable in continuing traditions. Family bowling night, attendance at and fellowship at places of worship, and involvement in events with other families are important ways to maintain a sense of stability and continuity. If the family has not previously had regular family traditions, now is a good time to start them. Encourage children to talk about these events and activities to the deployed parent in their communication.
5. **Help children understand the finite nature of a deployment by devising developmentally appropriate time-lines.** Although the parents may not always know the exact time that the deployment will take place, it is still helpful to make an estimate, and then help a child craft a calendar of some type, illustrated and punctuated with events which help to define time for them. Examples to include are holidays, birthdays, special family and extended family events, school events, vacations, and other "markers" which help to divide up the time of deployment absence into short and finite time episodes. Create a paper timeline with dates, which extends around a room, which can be illustrated

by the child, or make a chain made of illustrated paper links, which are dated and illustrated. These links can be cut ceremoniously on a daily basis.

6. **To children, no news is worse than bad news.** Studies with children of deployed parents reveal that the children's main preoccupation from day to day is not over the absent parent, but with the remaining parent. At some level, children are concerned about what is going on with the remaining parent. If that parent becomes short, cross, self-absorbed, tearful, with no explanation, the child's fantasies about that parent's ability to function are worse than what the reality is. Thus, the remaining parent should be relatively open about sharing concerns and news about the deployed parent. If the child has an explanation as to why the parent is irritable, tearful, or preoccupied, it is much easier to accept. Parents should not use their children as surrogate adults and load all of their concerns on the child, but should use judgement in sharing enough to ease the child's worries.
7. **Listen to a child's worries about the deployed parent and answer questions as truthfully as possible.** Follow up a child's questions with further questions as to what prompted them to bring up an issue. Listen carefully first, before trying to dispel what you consider to be false notions on the part of the child. Explore as far as possible a child's question and concern to show that you are trying to understand what he/she is worried about. Don't keep pursuing the issue after a child appears to be satisfied. Be reassuring about protective measures and training designed to protect the deployed parent, but do not make false assurances about not getting hurt or not dying.
8. **Maintain firm routine and discipline in the home.** Under the best of circumstances, maintaining order and routine for children in the home is difficult. It is even more difficult when a parent is suddenly absent. The child will manifest anxiety about this new separation, and the concerns over the ability of the remaining parent to function, by testing the resolve of the remaining parent, testing rules, and flouting routines. With the increase in responsibilities, numbers of tasks and new stresses, it will be tempting not to pursue and enforce limits. Only later does it become evident that the stress level increases quickly, when it is too late. Be proactive and discuss with the child your intent to have very firm routines related to bedtimes, morning routines, room clean-up, chore accountability, and homework. Then follow through with a clear and predictable set of consequences and rewards to keep the program going.
9. **Initiate and maintain a close relationship with the school and the child's teacher.** Have a conference with the significant figures in the child's schooling, depending on the child's level. This may only involve the child's classroom teacher for the young child, or others, such as several teachers, counselor, or principal for the older child or special needs child. Make clear to them that the child's parent has been deployed and that there may be an increase in stress at home. Anticipate the first signs of stress in the child. Signs of vulnerability and stress are deteriorating academic performance, behavioral problems in the classroom, problems in peer relationships, unexplained mood changes, tearfulness or irritability, or worsening of previously existing behavioral problems. Have a plan devised with the school authorities for constructive and helpful interventions to support the child and redirect him/her to previous levels of successful function. Be ready to have further conferences if necessary. Be proactive and take the lead.
10. **As the remaining parent, make sure you take care of yourself.** If one is interested in the wellbeing of a child, the dictum is always, "Take care of the caretaker." Unfortunately, because of the many demands upon the remaining parent, it is difficult to

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make this happen. Taking care of oneself must be seen as a necessity and given high priority in planning. Frequently, the remaining parent is basically a working single parent. However, sit and plan a schedule, and include the child in the planning if it is appropriate. Let your child know that you will be much better able to take care of him/her, that you will be much more fun to be with, and have more energy if you can take time to get out and exercise, take a scheduled nap, have alone time, or take time with a good supportive friend. The time periods can be short, but should be planned, so that you are not feeling guilty. Express appreciation to your child when you take the time for yourself, and let him/her know how much better you feel.

## **Online Learning: Building Resilient Kids**

“Building Resilient Kids” is a virtual online course that is very informative and provides a lot of information with regards to the military children in the school system, as well as the military in general. The course is free, and was created by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of public affairs, The course can be accessed at [http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/training\\_course/](http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/training_course/) (click on Web course on the right side of the page).

Objectives of the Web Course:

To increase your understanding of the...

- Military community, lifestyle and culture as the backdrop for your military students
- Social, emotional and educational needs and challenges of military students including issues of mobility and deployment
- Special challenges of youth during wartime including separation, reunion, death and disability, and programs to help students cope with these challenges.
- Strategies used by school staff—administrators, support staff and teachers—to improve educational, behavioral and health outcomes for all students, enumerating those factors at the school, classroom and community levels
- Strategies to increase students’ school connectedness
- School wide and classroom strategies to build student resilience, particularly social, emotional and academic problem solving skills described at each developmental stage
- Best and promising practices which you can implement in your district, your school and your classroom to create a climate where students feel safe and supported to overcome their challenges
- Strategies to build school, parent and community partnerships

## **Death and Grief**

Deployment: Strategies for Working with Kids in military Families.  
Karen Petty, PhD

Although military children are typically healthy strong, and resilient, they are also at risk for emotional trauma in the event that one or both parents are lost during active duty and deployment. Children's stages of development and their environment strongly influence their conception of death Religion, culture, and ethnicity are also powerful predictors of how they will handle the stress of learning that they have lost a very important person in their lives. There is not right or wrong way to grieve or to heal, and healing takes time. Children cannot be expected to "get over" the loss of someone they love. Normal grief reactions in children include symptoms such as stomachs and headaches, lack of concentration, clinginess, excessive crying, irritability, and regression in behavior.

One of the most important ways that we can help children to grieve is to be completely honest when we communicate with them and to allow them to experience grief and sadness without shame or guilt. Refrain from statements such as, "Your mommy would not want you to be sad" or "its going to be ok tomorrow" The following list can help you know what to do for and say

### **Talking to Grieving Kids**

- Talk about deceased with children- mention their favorite thing to do, favorite foods, etc. "Your dad loved mashed potatoes, didn't he?" Recall or tell stories about the deceased, and ask children to tell stories often.
- Be honest about the death and how it occurred. Offer as much information as the child can understand: "daddy died in his plane" or "Mommy died in her car in an accident".
- Encourage children to ask more questions if they do not understand- as often as they need to.
- Encourage families to involve children in funeral or memorial planning.
- Help them to understand that they are not responsible for the death of their loved ones.
- Provide good touches and hugs.
- Reassure children that its normal to feel sad and that it may take a long time to feel better. Children (like adults) will grieve and heal in their own way and in their own time.
- Honor religious tradition regarding life after death or non-existence of life after death. Avoid presenting your own religious beliefs if that is not the wish of the remaining parent pr guardian.
- Plan activities to celebrate the deceased loved ones birthday or special occasions such as memorial.

### Helping kids Grieve

- Use nationally known centers for children and grief such as the Dougy Center ([www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)) and the Alcove Center for Grieving Children and their families ([www.alcove.org](http://www.alcove.org)) These have suggestions for Books, groups meetings, and resources in your locals area.
- Suggest that the remaining parents or guardian contact the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS, [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)), a non-profit organization that provides services to all who have lost a loved one who was serving in the armed forces. TAPS counselors are available 24 hours a day, and seven days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277) or by email at [info@taps.org](mailto:info@taps.org). Everyone there has experienced death and grief.
- Learn the name if a Chaplain or the family support center for the installation or command nearest you to share with the parents or guardian. For instance, chaplain care and grief recovery hotlines are available for many armed service branches.
- Provide books about death that are age appropriate, such as the ones for preschoolers and early schoolagers listed:
  - a. Brown, Laurie Krasny, and Marc Brown. 1998. When dinosaurs die: a guide to understanding death. Boston: Little, Brown.
  - b. Brown, Margaret Wise. 2008. The dead bird. New York: William Morrow.
  - c. Bunting, Eve. 1982. The happy funeral. New York: HarperCollins Childrens Books.
  - d. Clifton, Lucille 1988. Everett Anderson's goodbye. Illustrated by Ann Grifalconi. New York: Henry Holt.
  - e. Coerr, Eleanor 1989. The Josefina story quilt. New York: HarperTrophy.
  - f. Cohen, Miriam and Ronald Himler. 1984. Jim Dog's muffins. New York: Dell Yearling.
  - g. Fassler, Joan. 1983. My grandpa died today. New York: Shawnee Press.
  - h. Gould, Deborah, and Cheryl Harness. 1987. Grandpa's slide show. New York: Viking Kestrel Picture Books.
- Acquire books to learn about procedures and activities to do with children when they have lost a loved one:
  - a. 35 ways to help a Grieving child (The Dougy Center 1999)
  - b. Helping Children Cope with Death (The Dougy Center 1998)

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- c. What about kids? Understanding Their Needs in Funerals Planning and Services (The Dougy Center 2004b)
- d. After a Death: An Activity Book for Children (Lindholm and Schuurman 2007)
- e. Never the same: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Parent (Schuurman 2004)
- f. A Tiny Boat at Sea: How to Help Children who Have a Parent Diagnosed with Cancer (Smith 200)
- g. Waving Goodbye: An Activities Manual for Children in Grief (The Dougy Center 2004a)

# Elementary Support Program for Children with Family Members who are in the Military and Deployed During a Time of Conflict

Originally Developed in March of 2003 in consultation with the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, New York State, Family Assistance Coordination Office. Revised January 2008.

Revised by:

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**This program was designed to support those children who have an immediate family member (i.e., father, mother, sibling, primary caregiver) who is part of a military deployment during a time of conflict. It is designed for use in a group setting, but can be adapted for use with an individual. It is targeted for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. In recognition that school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors have little time to devote to the creation of new programs, this program was designed to provide a tool for educators to address the unique needs of children who are directly affected by military conflict and/or world events. It can be modified depending upon the specific needs of the group.**

**Prior to the first session, appropriate parental permission must be granted. Please refer to the sample letters contained in**

**this packet. The materials needed for this program are low cost and typically available in most elementary schools. The program is designed to run for eight weeks, but could easily be adapted depending on individual needs. The program has a positive focus and each session is designed to last approximately 30-40 minutes. The authors give full permission to replicate any material contained in this packet.**

## Activities

### Prior to Session 1:

- **Decide on dates, time, location, transportation (if appropriate)**
- **Decide if snacks will be provided**
- **Obtain/Prepare materials:**
  - **One scrapbook for each child (either pre-made or made from construction paper)**
  - **Markers, glitter, glue, tape, scissors, colored paper stickers, etc. for decorating scrapbook pages and other projects**
  - **Old magazines**
  - **Pencils**
  - **Large paper and markers for brainstorming activities and group sign/banner**
  - **Small cardboard or wooden boxes (one for each child)**
  - **Prepare a bulletin board or poster board was a flag with stars missing**
    - **Pre-cut stars**
- **Obtain parental permission**
- **Contact classroom teachers of involved students**

**Session 1:**

**Objective: Icebreaker, group identity formation**

**Activity: Favorites/Getting to Know You, Group name**

- Divide students into groups (3-4 students per group). If there is a large age range, "buddy" older students with younger students and form groups by pairing up sets of "buddies". Explain directions of activity:
  - Complete "Getting to Know Me & My Favorites" activity (see attached). Older students should assist younger students. This information will be used to help students think of a name for the group.
  - Have students compare their information and brainstorm possible names for the group
- Have students meet as a whole group and share possible ideas for the group name. Select a group name from ideas shared or merge ideas to form a group name. Once the name has been selected, the group should sign and decorate the group banner.
- Star activity: Each student will be given a star and it will be explained to them that at the start of each group they will be given a similar star. They will be expected to write their name on one side and a wish on the other. If they are comfortable, students will be asked to share their wishes and attach them to the flag poster/bulletin board. This activity will be repeated at the start of each session. At the end of the group, students will be given their stars for their scrapbooks.
- Prior to the conclusion of the group, students will be given the "My Hero" sheet (see attached) and asked to complete it at home and bring it to the next group

**Session 2:**

**Objective: Sharing "My Hero" project; start scrapbook**

**Activity: Sharing information about family member who is deployed**

- **Star activity**
- **Depending on the number of students in the group, this can be done as a whole group or the students can be broken into smaller groups. Students should share the "My Hero" project they completed**
- **Students will each be given a scrapbook. (Depending on available resources these can either be commercially made scrapbooks or scrapbooks made from large construction paper and string).**
- **Students will decorate the first page of their scrapbook with their "My Hero" project.**
- **Collect scrapbooks at the end of the session**

### **Session 3:**

**Objective:** Coping with the extended absence of a family member and dealing with milestones that will be missed.

**Activity:** creating a calendar

- **Star activity**
- **Provide students with a blank calendar**
- **Discuss how sometimes it is difficult to wait for someone to come home. Discuss how sometimes children might feel sad or even angry if they can't share something important with someone they love right away.**
- **Have students share examples**
- **Share with them how a calendar can be used in many different ways to help them through these times (i.e., they can record special days, use it as a "count down")**
- **Have students come up with ideas to write on the calendar to help pass the time or things that they could do for their family member who is away. For example:**
  - **Write a letter to the person who is away**
  - **Write down something funny that happened**
  - **Draw a picture for the person who is away**
- **Add this calendar to the scrapbook**
- **Ask the students to bring in pictures of themselves and their family member doing something special for the next session**
- **Collect scrapbooks**

**Session 4:**

**Objective: Remembering positive activities that the student enjoys doing with their family member who is away**

**Activity: creating a scrapbook page of the special activity; creating "coupons" for this activity to be redeemed upon the adult's return.**

- **Star activity**
- **In a large or small group, have students share their pictures and special activity**
- **Have students decorate a page in their scrapbook with these pictures**
- **Create "coupon" for that activity that the child can either mail to their family member or present to them upon their return**
- **Have students bring in something that they completed in school that they are proud of/want to share (i.e., book that they have read, something they have written)**
- **Collect scrapbooks**

**Session 5:**

**Objective: sharing school activities**

**Activity: create a page in the scrapbook highlighting a school achievement or activity**

- **Star activity**
- **Have students share school material that they brought in.**
- **Explain that even though their family member is not able to see it right now, that they will be creating a scrapbook page so that they can share it with them when they return.**

**Session 6:**

**Objective: Identifying feelings since deployment**

**Activity: Listing and identifying feelings, making a collage**

- **Star activity**
- **The students will be encouraged to talk about their feelings**
- **The group leader will explain that feelings can be positive, negative, or neutral. It will be important to stress that all feelings are normal and it's normal not to feel anything at all.**
- **Discuss with the group that it's OK to be happy. They may miss their family member, but it's still OK to enjoy other things even though they are still worried, etc.**
- **On a large sheet of paper (or on a chalk board) have students identify feelings that they have had since the deployment**
- **Have the students make a collage of their feelings using pictures, words, and art materials**
- **Attach collages to page in scrapbook**
- **Collect scrapbooks**

## **Session 7:**

**Objective: Dealing with anxiety**

**Activity: Creating a worry box**

- **Star activity**
- **Summarizes the activity from Session 6. Explain those students who have a family member who is deployed often worry or feel anxious.**
- **Explain how worries can come and go, and sometimes they are stronger than others.**
- **Have students share some of their worries that they have talked about in other groups or new worries that have come up recently**
- **Have students decorate the worry boxes**
- **Discuss how the worry box is a symbol of putting worries aside and continuing to enjoy each day**

**Session 8:**

**Objective:** Closure, taking care of yourself

**Activity:** reviewing scrapbooks

- Review previous sessions by going through the pages of the scrapbook
- Brainstorm ways of taking care of yourself. For example:
  - Healthy eating
  - Talking to others
  - Asking questions
  - Exercising
  - Getting enough sleep
- Return the stars to students and have them place them in their scrapbook
- As a whole group, have students share their favorite memory of the group
- Have students complete the evaluation forms (see attached)

Post group/Follow up activities:

- These activities can be replicated multiple times at home throughout the length of deployment. Parents should be encouraged to do similar activities with their children.
- Having the student share his or her scrapbook with their family member who has been away may provide an opportunity for them to reconnect
- Consider monthly/bi-monthly follow-up sessions depending on length of the deployment

**Worksheets, Letters, & Evaluations**

Getting to Know Me  
&  
My Favorites

Name:	Age:
Color:	Sport:
Food:	Hobby:
Animal:	Author:
Movie:	Book:

How many brothers and sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any pets? What kind? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a favorite sports team? If you do, tell about it.

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## My Hero

This is \_\_\_\_\_.

He is my \_\_\_\_\_.

He is not at home right now because he is in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

When he comes home, I am looking forward to

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

I am very proud of him because

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

## My Hero

This is \_\_\_\_\_.

She is my \_\_\_\_\_.

She is not at home right now because she is in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

When she comes home, I am looking forward to

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

I am very proud of her because

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Initial Letter**

**Date**

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

**In an effort to meet the needs of our students at *Name of school or district*, we would like to offer special support to those children who have an immediate family member who is in the military or otherwise deployed. If there is sufficient interest, *School*, will be forming a group of children, which will meet *date, time, and location* for eight weeks. The group will be led by *Your name*. Our hope is that the children will be given an extra sense of support, understanding, and encouragement during this challenging time. If you are interested, please complete and return the enclosed form. If you have any questions, please contact *Group leader* at *555-1234*.**

**Sincerely,  
Group Leader**

=====

\_\_\_\_\_ **I give permission for my child to participate**

**Student's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Elementary School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best way to contact you:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Person who is deployed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship to the student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please list any specific concerns:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Group Member Evaluation

Did you enjoy the group?

Yes 😊 \_\_\_\_\_

No ☹️ \_\_\_\_\_

Did it help you to know that other kids  
have family members away from home too?

Yes 😊 \_\_\_\_\_

No ☹️ \_\_\_\_\_

What was your favorite activity?

## **Parent/Guardian Evaluation**

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

**Your child has just completed a group aimed at providing additional support to children who have an immediate family member that is away from home due to military service. Please take a moment and complete the following questions. You can return complete surveys via backpack mail attention (Group leader).**

- 1. Overall, did your child report that he or she enjoyed the group?**
- 2. Did you find that the group seemed to help your child's adjustment?**
- 3. Did your child share the activities which were completed in the group?**
- 4. Do you have an additional comments or suggestions?**

**Thank-you,  
Group Leader**

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Last Saved On: 3/1/2011 4:00:00 PM  
Last Saved By: NECSD  
Total Editing Time: 52 Minutes  
Last Printed On: 3/1/2011 4:09:00 PM  
As of Last Complete Printing  
Number of Pages: 58  
Number of Words: 23,226 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 132,394 (approx.)